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**January 27, 2015**

**TO: Executive and Legislative Nominations Committee**

**FROM: Susan Pronovost, Executive Director**

**Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association**

**RE: Nomination – Steven K. Reviczky, Commissioner of Agriculture**

My name is Susan Pronovost. I reside in Waterbury and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Greenhouse Growers Association. We appreciate this opportunity to offer brief comments regarding Governor Dannel P. Malloy's reappointment of Steven K. Reviczky as Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture.

CGGA promotes the interests of the greenhouse industry which in Connecticut is largely comprised of some 300 family-owned small businesses that grow flowers, plants, and greenhouse crops as well as several large, multi-million dollar commercial greenhouse growers. Recently released USDA census data indicates that the Connecticut greenhouse industry utilizes more than 10.5 million square feet of production space and has been the fastest growing sector of agriculture in this state.

Strong leadership at the helm of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture is critical in order to drive the economic engine of agriculture in Connecticut. Specifically, the Connecticut greenhouse industry has been cited by the USDA as the most rapidly advancing agricultural industry in this state. According to the 2012 USDA's Census of Northeast Agriculture, Connecticut's greenhouse

grown greenery, floriculture, bedding plants, herbs, etc. exceeded \$131 million in value and greenhouse-grown vegetable crops contributed another \$6 million in economic value. These values represent local sales and consumption, and a significant export trade for our state.

I would like to take this opportunity to point out some very important agricultural and economic highlights that have been accomplished under the Commissioner's tenure:

- The number of Connecticut farms has grown by nearly 22% in the last five years which is the highest growth rate of all New England states.
- 34 farms, 4,577 acres with a total valuation of \$22,418,500 have been preserved since 2011. That equates to an average of 9 farms, 900 acres and \$5.5 million per year.
- There have been \$1,670,000 grants allocated for the Farmland Restoration Program with 1,276 acres restored to productive farmland use since its inception in 2012. There are 128 completed or active applications encompassing 62 towns.
- There are 68 active applications in the Farmland Preservation program encompassing 6,980 acres with an estimated valuation of \$36,291,000.
- The Community Farms Preservation Program that was initiated in 2012 has to date, facilitated 25 joint town-Department of Agriculture Cooperative Agreements.
- Enhanced distribution of Farm Transition and Farm Viability Grants to enable farmers, non-profit agricultural organizations, farmers' markets, and municipalities to purchase capital, expand operations, create jobs, promulgate the CT Grown brand, and expand access to locally grown food within our cities. These grant programs have benefitted 48 farmers, 27 municipalities, and 37 non-profit organizations. These figures do not include the 2015 grant cycle comprised of an additional \$350,000 in funding.

Commissioner Reviczky's leadership, vision, and dedication to the mission of the Connecticut Department of Agriculture are true hallmarks of his many successes. The statistics that I have outlined are but abbreviated testaments to the economic, agricultural, and farmland preservation achievements of the Department of Agriculture under Commissioner Reviczky's tenure.

To that end, we are pleased to offer these comments and respectfully, our endorsement of the reappointment of Steven K. Reviczky as Commissioner to the Connecticut Department of Agriculture. I would be happy to answer any questions you have and appreciate this Committee's consideration of our views.